

## Our Picket Fence is Pink so What? by Dreamr

**Category:** IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

**Genre:** Also I love Kid Fics so here you go, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Domestic Fluff, Family Feels, Fix-It, I'm obsessed with the idea of Richie as a dad, Kid Fic, M/M, Meet the Family, Post-Canon, Rated T for Swearing - it's Richie what did you expect?, Slow Burn, Tooth-Rotting Fluff

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Myra Kaspbrak, Original Characters, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

**Relationships:** Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak & Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

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**Summary:**

Richie returns home after fighting It. Bruised and overwhelmed by new old memories. Eddie is still in the Hospital and Richie would have loved to stay, sit at his bedside, hold his hand. But that is not his place. That is for Eddie's wife. His place is Home. Home with his girls and Mr. Carrot.

(Or, Richie is a Dad and everyone knows but Eddie.)

# **1. Rotting Peaches (aka a warm welcome)**

## **Author's Note:**

Okay, so I know this is different from most Reddie stories out there. But like hear me out: Richie as a Dad?! Like hell yes!

Overall, it's mostly canon compliant - besides the kids obviously. And Eddie dying (did that even happen tho? No, it didn't). I'm also thinking about reviving Stan. Tell me what you think.

This is basically just me writing what I'd love to read so yeah...

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Richie's flight had been delayed by hours. When the Uber finally pulled up at the curb of his house it was late. Way later than he had anticipated.

"Thanks, Mark." Richie slung his duffle bag over one shoulder, gave his driver a tired baring of teeth that might pass as a grin. "Have a good night – oh, and remember what I told you about Vaseline! That is wisdom seldomly shared."

It made the younger man chuckle. "Sure, I'll keep it in mind."

With a yawn, Richie trudged up to the entrance. The cactus next to the door looked like a diseased rabbit. Nothing much had changed. The LA night was just as warm as before, the pink flowers blooming all over his neighbor's yard still smelled horrendous and you couldn't see any stars. The stars in Derry had been so different. Actually visible for starters.

"Good evening, Mr. Carrot", Richie greeted the cactus. "How is this night treating you, good Sir? I've had quiet the experience back home. One out of five stars. Would not recommend. Man, I hate clowns! Fucking finally know why."

Richie withstood the ever-present urge to give the cactus a pat on the head. Instead he fished the keys out of his pocket and opened the door. The delightful smell of rotting peaches wafted straight into his nostrils, made him stumble back. He gagged impressively.

"What the fuck?" Richie exchanged a look with the googly eyes he had stuck onto Mr. Carrot. "Smells like Eddie's Mom in there."

For a second, he seriously considered entering the house. But like, he had fucking killed a fucking killer clown! And it didn't really smell that much better outside. He should just order a cow off of craigslist of something. Let it destroy those disgusting flowers.

Bracing himself Richie entered the hallway. He slipped out of his shoes and pushed them into their space next to his running shoes. The automatic action made him pause. He frowned. Memories of Eddie bitching at him because he was lounging on the bed with his dirty, bacteria invested sneakers on bumbled out of the woodworks. Eddie's face going red, his hazel eyes big in overexaggerated disgust. Arms gesticulating wildly. Talking so fast spit went flying. His voice rising in pitch and volume as he was talking himself into a rage.

Remembering the past always left him aching with nostalgia. Remembering Eddie... Remembering Eddie was even harder. There were so many memories. So many feelings. So Richie did what he had learned early on in his life and what his therapist told him was the most asscrack coping mechanism that he should stay the fuck away from if possible. He repressed. Took all his feelings, walled them up in a safe little space, maybe for later, maybe for never, just not for

now.

Richie placed his keys in a bowl on the sideboard and wondered for a while when exactly he had lost his sense for organized chaos. Eddie would laugh so much if he could see him like this. All neat and tidy and shit.

Richie pulled a face. Feeling rebellious he pulled off his socks and threw them at the dark shadow of the couch not too far away.

Someone shrieked. High-pitched.

Richie's heart skipped a beat. Startled. He barely withheld a very manly screech. Maybe not as successfully as he would have liked.

A small head appeared above the back of the couch. "Daddy?"

Richie flung his arm out in a dramatic gesture, hitting the light switch with more coordination than he would have thought himself capable of. "Lily!"

The girl owlishly blinked at him, her eyes adjusting to the sudden brightness. "Daddy, you're late."

Richie sighed. "I know, bug. There was a problem with the plane. Why aren't you in bed?"

Lily pulled her face into an impressive pout. "Ami snores. Soooooo loud. Sometimes I think it's an earthquake. And I wanted to wait for you, because you were gone forever. Sooooo long. I finished all Fruit Loops is how long. And Ami said she wouldn't buy them 'cause they are too much sugar and make my blood sticky."

Richie chuckled. "So I guess we have to go shopping tomorrow."

Lily squealed excitedly and scrambled up off the couch. "You're the best Dad ever! Way better than Eva's! The best to the very end of the Universe!"

She crashed into Richie's legs, her favorite blanket tied around her neck like a cape. He leaned down and picked her up with a slight groan. She was growing so fast, almost too heavy to carry already.

He walked them back to the couch and settled into the soft cushions. She buried her face in his neck, her little hands fisting into the fabric of his slightly sweaty shirt. Holding her, feeling her breathing made him choke up. He could have lost this. He could have died. Left them alone all over again.

It was difficult to control his breathing, to not slip into a panic attack. Suddenly overwhelmed he pressed Lily closer. Her hair smelled like lemongrass – his favorite shampoo. She hugged him back equally as strong.

It took a while for his pulse to slow again. Until he didn't have to count his breaths anymore.

"I missed you, Daddy", Lily whispered.

Immediately, Richie was all choked up again. "I missed you too, bug."

He wouldn't be here if it not for Eddie saving his life. So close. So fucking close. He'd have to call Bev first thing in the morning, ask how he was doing. Whether he had finally woken up. Whether his wife had arrived.

Richie was happy to be home. But he also missed the Losers already. Their easy camaraderie. How they just got him, understood him. Accepted him.

Lily fell asleep in his lap. Richie sat there for a long time, mindlessly rubbing her back and listening to her breathing.

Hugging her felt different now. Like remembering his childhood and teenage years opened up a deep, hidden part of his self. Like he was now able to hug his daughter with more of his heart.

"Richie?"

He swiveled his head back until he was able to see the stairs. "Hey Ami." His voice was soft, slightly broken.

“Did you cry?” Amelia sounded horrified. “Wait! Are you crying?”

Richie shrugged with the one shoulder Lily wasn’t resting on. For once not cracking a joke.

“You look like death warmed over.” Amelia came to a standstill in front of him, scrutinizing him. “Did you get into a fight in Derry fucking Maine, Richie? Like seriously? I thought it was some kind of reunion with childhood friends you didn’t even remember.”

Richie shushed her, gesticulating at Lily. “Nothing I couldn’t handle, don’t worry.”

“Don’t worry?” she mouthed at him, flinging her arms out and rolling her eyes. “Have you looked into a mirror recently?”

“You wish you were as pretty as me!” Richie whispered back.

“Yeah! You wear your bruises like makeup. Sure! You could’ve just asked for my eyeliner.”

“I’m more for the natural products. All organic and shit.”

Amelia sighed, long and suffering. Flipped him the bird. Richie gripped her wrist and pulled her down onto the couch. Kissed the offending finger. Amelia burrowed into his side after only a short moment of hesitation. He slung an arm around her shoulders, held her close.

“Are you okay, Dad?” Amelia’s voice was slightly wobbly, cautious. Like she was afraid of the answer.

“I’m fine, Amelia. Only some scratches. A few bruises. It’ll heal.” Eddie is of far worse.

“Good.” She muffled a yawn in his shoulder. “I won’t even ask about your emotional state but you should know I care.”

Richie couldn’t help the fond smile. He tousled her hair until she beat his hand away. Lily mumbled something in her sleep, tossing her head slightly to the side. Amelia put a hand on her sister’s back, rubbing soothing circles.

“She had a lot of bad dreams while you were gone.” She looked worried.

Her words hurt. “I’m sorry for leaving you two alone for so long.”

Amelia shrugged, all trying-to-be-a-grown-up teenager. “Mrs. Alvarez is here, she’s been showing me how to cook Mexican food. We made Tamales for dinner. There are some leftovers in the fridge if you want them. She’s also been teaching Lily and me some Spanish. I love her, she’s great.”

Richie hummed.

Amelia sat up and looked at him. “I’m happy you’re home though.”

“Me too.”

“I’ll demand the full story of what happened tomorrow! I’m too tired to pry it out of you right now.”

“So responsible, I’m proud.”

They were gearing up for another Sarcasm Contest when Lily whimpered and their attention got diverted.

“I’ll let her sleep in my bed tonight.” Richie hugged her a bit tighter. “Do you want to join us?”

It said a lot about how much Amelia had actually missed him that she didn’t even protest. She nodded. “Only if you shower first though. You smell like you took a shower in grey water.”

Richie chuckled. “I guess the smell is more persistent than I thought. Do I smell like caca, señorita?”

Amelia pulled a face. “Worse.”

In the morning, Richie found the source of the rotten smell in the kitchen. On the kitchen counter sat an assortment of decomposing fruits. All carefully labeled with the Latin name and a date. It was

Lily's science project.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Excuse my French! I'm 100% convinced Richie would let his teenaged daughter swear though.

I hope you liked this introduction to my OCs, feel free to tell me what to think. Or if you noticed any glaring grammar/spelling mistakes.

Have a great day or night!



## 2. A Sales Guy (aka a warm welcome take 2)

### Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie figures shit out.

(Eddie's POV)

Eddie woke up. Again. Not that he remembered all too much about the other times. They were blurry. Memories of warm hands holding his, Bill's stutter and Bev's mocking voice.

This time he felt somewhat clear-headed if still a bit woozy. Almost like he was actually human and not just some vague idea of an identity moving through time and space.

The hospital room was still all too white, all too empty. He had dreamed of thick glasses, stupid accents and comforting warmth. The memory slowly dissolved as he lay there. He held impossibly still, desperately trying to hold onto it. Keep it just a little longer.

A screeching voice interrupted his concentration and the dream slipped through his fingers. Sinking away and leaving nothing but a sense of betrayal.

"No! I forbid it! They just cleaned his room! Do you know what diseases you could drag in there? Isn't it enough that you almost got him killed once?"

Eddie made a low sound. It was pathetic even to his own ears. The urge to climb out of the window and just disappear into the blinding sunlight of the day was overwhelming for a few moments. Then the familiar sense of defeat swept in. Nausea curdled his stomach.

A soft, patient voice answered Myra's, too low for Eddie to understand. It sounded like Ben.

After what seemed like a lengthy discussion, the door opened.

"Five minutes!" Myra insisted. "Not a second longer!"

The Losers filtered into the room and Eddie clearly saw Bill and Mike exchanging a look, Bill rolling his eyes.

"Oh Eddie, honey, you're awake!" Beverly's grim face transformed into a sunny smile.

They lined both sides of his bed, reaching out to touch his shoulders or knees. Eddie tried to smile.

But... "Where is Richie?"

His voice broke halfway through the question. Husky, unused.

He really, really needed his inhaler right this second.

Where was Richie?

He didn't remember seeing him the last few times he had woken up. He couldn't be - be dead, could he?

Picking up on his rising panic, Beverly squeezed his shoulder. "He's fine. I just got off the phone with him a few minutes ago."

Relieved Eddie managed to at least somewhat relax. His throat hurt. Why wasn't Richie here?

Bill grinned. "He had to go h-home."

General amusement spread among the group. Eddie just scowled at them, feeling left out of some kind of joke.

Mike cleared his throat. "On a more important note, we have some good news."

The suspenseful silence was the perfect setup for one of Richie's stupid comments.

"Stan just got released from the psych ward. He'll get back on his feet."

Eddie felt himself gasp. "Stan is alive?"

The phone Ben had given him before Myra demanded they leave became Eddie's most prized possession. His old one was gone, probably broken and buried beneath countless pounds of rubble and stone.

He kept it hidden from Myra. It was his lifeline. Losing it would be unbearable. And it was obvious that she disapproved of his friends. Strongly.

During his rehabilitation and later when he was discharged Eddie got into the habit of locking himself in the bathroom, reading through all the messages in the group chat or calling his friends. That is until Beverly noticed.

She was harsh, talking about abusive relationships and falling into old patterns. About the comfort of the known.

The worst was that Eddie knew. Since he woke up in the hospital he knew. But it was hard. He rarely got a word in edgewise with Myra. And it was just so easy. To step back. Let her decide.

One evening Richie called. They rarely talked. Rarely communicated at all. It was like Richie had taken a step back - like he was purposely putting distance between them.

Eddie immediately picked up. Even though he was sitting at the dinner table with Myra. Even though he knew she would hate it.

"Richie?"

"Hey there Spaghetti-man."

Myra looked aghast. A deep frown burrowing into her forehead.

"What's up?"

"Oh, I just had this idea when I was with your Mom last night. It hit me right in the cojones."

Eddie kind of snorted in amusement and got up. Left the table in the middle of dinner. Myra looked speechless. Furious.

"The woman is dead, Richie. Let her rest in peace."

"Oh, I'm not so sure about that. She seemed pretty lively to me. Anyways, Bill and I wanted to organize this little get-together in LA. Invite all the Losers over and shit. No plus ones allowed though. Just the original squad."

Eddie looked at Myra whose face was slowly coloring a deep, unhealthy purple. She looked like she was holding her breath.

"No problem." Eddie turned his back to her. "I'm getting divorced."

Richie lived in a pretty decent neighborhood. It looked expensive. Which it probably was. LA-prices were insane. Eddie had looked into apartments here and quickly given up on the idea.

His suitcase tumbled over an impressive crack in the pavement of the sidewalk and almost crashed to the side. The city had really bad streets. They were almost hazardous.

The weather sucked too. There was a thick blanket of clouds and smog suffocating the city and it was warm. Too warm for March anyways. And humid.

Eddie dragged his suitcase up the hill towards the house his Uber driver had indicated. He still wasn't 100% convinced that it was actually Richie's. In his head Richie lived in a tiny, messy shoebox somewhere downtown. Not in the hills. And certainly not in a modern looking house with an almost domestic aura.

There was also this monstrosity of a pink picket fence guarding the surprisingly neat front yard. It was a decidedly weird sight.

He trudged up the path to the house. Next to the entrance door stood a scraggly cactus on an imposing pedestal. It was staring at him out of glued on googly eyes. Suddenly, Eddie was rather sure he had indeed found the right house. The "clowns forbidden" doormat was an additional clue.

He rang the doorbell, nerves scrabbling through his chest. He hadn't

seen Richie since back before Neibolt street. At least not in person. There had been a few Skype calls with more or less the whole Losers Club. But they didn't count. Richie hadn't been more than a few blurry pixels on his screen.

The door opened. Slowly and not all too far. A little girls head appeared in the gap. She was young. A child. Her skin the color of milk chocolate, hair a frizzy mess.

She eyed him up and down. Smiled almost too fake - and then closed the door in his face. Without a word.

Eddie blinked at the closed door. His brain didn't compute. He must have the wrong house after all. No doubt.

Just when he wanted to step back from the door he heard it. Richie's voice. Slightly muffled but clear enough.

"Who was it?"

"A sales guy." She was still close enough to the door that Eddie could hear her perfectly.

His jaw dropped.

"A sales guy?" he repeated dumbly.

"A sales guy?" Richie echoed at the same time.

Eddie pressed his finger to the doorbell again. Insistently. The dancing melody rang throughout the house.

Not even three seconds later, the door burst open. Richie crowed at the sight of Eddie's scowl. Then he doubled over laughing. Hysterically.

"I knew it was you", he got out in-between fits of laughter. "Oh Eds! This- this is gold!"

Eddie sneered. "What the hell, man?"

The little girl appeared from behind Richie's legs, eyeing him once

again.

"You're Eddie?" She smiled radiantly, lacking more than one tooth.  
"Sorry, I thought you were smaller."

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Stan is alive \*throws confetti\* which proves this fic is pure, unadulterated wish fulfillment on my part.  
Next chapter we'll experience more of the Toziers again.

I love writing Richie's kids. It's so much fun!

### 3. Parenting 101 (by Richie Tozier)

#### Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie isn't happy that he was left out of the loop.

And apparently Stan now has a dog (only mentioned so far).

Richie was still laughing. Undignified. With his head thrown back, all teeth on display. A full-bodied laugh that left him gasping and shaking.

Eddie didn't think it was that funny. At all. Especially because the little girl was giggling along. Even though she looked like she didn't understand what was going on.

At some point, their laughter drew a teenager into the room. Dark haired and lanky, glasses and oversized shirt. She looked a lot like Richie did back in the day. Style wise at least.

She watched the antics for a few moments before directing her attention towards Eddie.

"You must be Edward."

Richie choked on his own laughter. For a second, Eddie was worried he might actually die - but then he decided he definitely did not care.

The girl sighed overdramatically. "I'm sorry if that's not your preferred name. Richie is an asshole. Tried to convince me your name was Eduardo. No offence if it actually is - but like I mean you know him right? I'm pretty sure it was a joke... Unless it wasn't."

She turned towards Richie who was halfway to the floor, having slid down from the couch.

"Richie did you reverse-psychology me? Oh my God, did I just offend your-"

"WOW WOW!" Suddenly, Richie was serious. He scrambled upwards.

His tearstained eyes hectic.

"-best friend?" She narrowed her eyes at Richie.

Eddie cooed. "Richie~ I had no idea you cared."

Richie mimicked a full-bodied shiver. "Don't just ruin my street cred like that Ami! Now I'll get bullied."

He seemed a bit off. Then again, it was Richie. Richie was weird.

Eddie welcomed the glass of water from Richie with a muttered thanks. They were leaning against the kitchen island, watching the girls do their homework. There had been only minimal protest.

It left Eddie reeling. Richie was actually good with kids.

"Sooooo," Richie said.

Eddie put his glass down. Hard. Water splashed over his hand.

"Fuck you, Dickwad!"

Richie bowed slightly. "I serve to please, Sire."

"You have kids! Why the fuck didn't I know?"

Ami slapped her book closed. "You didn't tell him about us?"

She sounded hurt.

"Is this the kind of moment my therapist warned me not to make jokes at?" Richie actually sounded serious. Even though there was a slight undertone that Eddie definitely picked up on.

"Yes!" Ami threw her hands in the air.

Richie and Eddie exchanged a look.

"I'm sorry, honey."



Ami grumbled. Not happy but appeased. She turned back to her homework. Lily was humming along to the music from her headphones, oblivious to what was going on around her.

After a second of thought, Eddie grabbed Richie's wrist, dragging him outside. The garden was well maintained offering shade beneath a white blooming tree and even a small patch for herbs.

Eddie stepped out onto the wooden patio, pulled the sliding glass door closed behind them. There was a huge grill and even a fenced in pool. If not for the toys lying around it would look like a magazine cover.

"Do the others know?"

Richie scratched the back of his head. "Yeah. I had to explain why I was leaving while you were still half dead."

"Oh, fuck you! Why did nobody tell me? Like is there anything else everybody knows but me? Huh, Richie? Any key features of your life that absolutely everyone, probably even Stan's dog, is aware of but me?"

Clearing his throat, Richie took a step back. Nervous.

"I like the dick?"

The world stopped turning there for a moment. Eddie was sure he had misheard, misinterpreted. Maybe he had a brain tumor that made him hallucinate.

"What?" His voice was weak, disbelieving.

"I'm gay, more like bi. Ami says I'm probably pan. But I'm not even sure what that means."

Richie looked incredibly vulnerable. Afraid.

Afraid of rejection.

"That's- That's cool, man." Eddie had a hard time finding words.

"It won't change anything," Richie said quickly, emphatically. It was a promise.

Eddie disagreed. It changed everything.

"Rich," Eddie whispered. "I had like the biggest crush on you when we were teenagers."

"You had a crush on me? Aw, that's embarrassing."

It were empty words. Eddie could see that the information was still filtering through Richie's brain. The other man was slowly becoming more and more bug-eyed.

"Beep beep, Richie," he said half-heartedly.

"You-" Richie points at Eddie before gesticulating at himself, "Had a crush on me? Are you- Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm fucking sure!"

Richie stared at him like he had just revealed that he was related to Madonna or something equally unrealistic.

"I think I'm having a stroke."

Eddie sat with the girls for a bit. Ami - or Amelia as she had introduced herself - was fifteen, her sister seven. Lilian and her were both adopted.

"My Mom sometimes comes to visit me," Amelia whispered after making sure Lily wasn't listening. "She's a trainwreck. In and out of rehab since years."

She pulled a face. Got lost in her thoughts for a moment.

"Lily's parents died when she was just a baby. I don't really know more. Richie won't tell."

Blinking at her, Eddie nodded slightly. He didn't get why she thought

he was trustworthy. Why she was telling him all this personal stuff.

That was until she casually dropped a bomb a few minutes later and he realized Richie must have told her a fuckton about Derry and their past.

"You know just like when Mrs. K didn't allow you to go camping with the others, so you snuck out. And then you and Richie got drunk and almost drowned in waist high water? Because you wanted to catch turtles? It was a bit like that."

"We were high too," Richie said, sounding nostalgic and fond.

He tousled Amelia's hair and dropped into the chair next to Lily. Eddie gaped at him.

"Don't tell her that!"

"Why not? Open communication is the key to trust and a healthy relationship."

"Preach!" Amelia agreed and held her hand up for a high-five.

Flabbergasted, Eddie stared at the small family. It was weird to see Richie this happy, almost carefree. Back in Derry he had carried an aura of darkness and depression. Despair. They all had probably.

"Eduardo!"

Eddie snapped out of his thoughts. Diverted his eyes from Richie's smirk.

"What should we order for dinner? Ami always votes for healthy stuff so I need you to counter her. Please! Lily is in a phase where she agrees with Ami on almost everything. So your vote is crucial."

Ami cackled. "Eating healthy is something good, Richie. You're getting into that age now where one has to worry about heart diseases. Like old, you know. You're getting old."

"Eddie's Mom is old. That doesn't mean-" Richie made an undignified sound and blessedly stopped talking.

Eddie smiled at him like he hadn't just kicked him against the shin.  
"Why not just cook something?"

The older two Toziers exchanged a quick look before pealing laughter filled the huge open space.

Eddie narrowed his eyes at them. "Don't tell me this fancy-ass kitchen is just for decor?"

Silence was his answer. Silence interrupted by giggles and choked laughter. Lily pulled the headphones out of her ears, sparing a curious glance at Richie and Amelia. Eddie was surprised she had been able to work for so long with all that had been going on.

"Do you want to go shopping with me, Lily?" Eddie asked.

The girl's eyes widened with wonder. "Food shopping?"

"Yes. With your Dad's credit card. We'll splurge."

She started beaming. "Can I have celery sticks?"

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

So, mmmm, Eddie had a crush?

Also what do you think of Richie's parenting style?

Thank you for reading~~

You mean a great deal to me! Have a good day/  
night!

## 4. Steak with Fries

### Summary for the Chapter:

Just domestic bliss for my own mental health.

Enjoy reading <3

It was funny to see Eddie in the kitchen. He had wrapped himself in an apron that he had picked up while shopping with Lily and was standing at the island counter like he was royalty. Lily stood at his side on a stool, curious and only of little help.

The apron was one of the 'kiss the cook' variety. Eddie had grinned broadly while unpacking it. In response Richie's heart had skipped a beat like the dramatic bastard it was. He wasn't sure what it meant. That smile. Whether or not there was a meaning behind it.

"So, what are you cooking?" Amelia had snuck up behind Eddie and was now stealing glances at their future dinner over his shoulder.

"Jeez, Amelia." Eddie patted his chest. "Don't scare me like that!"

"Sorry."

"Steak with a side of fries. Obviously."

He was standing in front of an assortment of veggies and whole wheat pasta.

Amelia hummed in understanding. "The good sh- shtuff."

"Want to help?"

To Richie's utmost surprise, Amelia nodded eagerly.

"But I'm helping already!" Lily sounded deeply offended. "I was helping first."

Richie didn't recognize his own children. This was a side of them he had never seen before. He realized they might only avoid the kitchen

because he did. Because he was who they looked up to for direction.

Since Amelia had told him about Mrs. Alvarez' tamales he hadn't seen her even look into the direction of the stove. Suddenly, he felt bad. Her and Lily looked utterly enraptured as they watched Eddie wash the vegetables. And he was only washing them, nothing interesting was happening at all.

Amelia was allowed to help with cutting the zucchini and washing the greens, while Eddie took his time to explain to Lily how you peeled carrots.

"You have to be careful with the blade of the peeler," he told her. And: "We always point blades away from us."

Richie had taken a seat at the counter and decided to watch them. He didn't want to leave the room. Miss anything. His chest was swelling with feelings he was itching to make a joke at.

"Daddy look!"

Lily was holding up her first fully peeled carrot.

"You're a natural, bug!" Richie felt an excessive amount of pride in his daughter, couldn't help but grin.

She was adorable.

Eddie "sautéed" some onions, boiled the pasta. Added the veggies to the pan, first the carrots, then the peppers.

Richie watched him explain to the girls how you made tomato sauce from fresh tomatoes. How important a balanced meal was for the body. Why you added certain spices at certain times. That oregano had to cook for some time to develop its flavor.

There was an assortment of new spices and herbs on the kitchen counter. Quite a few Richie had only ever seen on TV.

Some garlic went in last, together with a few chickpeas "for protein".

Somehow, Richie wasn't surprised at all that Eddie had a thing for healthy food.

Amelia's eyes were sparkling. Plant based and healthy had been her goal for months now. Lily seemed to not really care what they had for dinner as long as she played an important part in preparing it. She was beaming because Eddie had bestowed the crucial task of stirring the sauce on her shoulders.

Richie decked the table. He even got out the fancy plates. The ones he had been gifted some years ago and that made Eddie 'ahh' when he first laid eyes on them. To Richie's surprise he even owned an assortment of napkins – mostly leftovers from birthday parties.

He got them some water to drink and left the sugary stuff in the fridge. For a moment, he had thought about it but Amelia had shaken her head with a meaningful glance at Eddie. So, only water it was.

After the lively dinner, Amelia disappeared upstairs into her room while Lily somehow convinced Eddie to play Lego's with her. Richie was elbow deep in dirty dishwater otherwise he might have saved him. Probably not.

They were building towers, maybe for a castle or a fort. Or just for fun. It made Richie feel all bubbly inside to see them discussing the best shape or what colors to use.

After loading the dishwasher he seized the opportunity and sent some pictures into the group chat. Beverly would love this. Bill as well. The others would get a giggle out of it. And some blackmail material.

Eddie didn't seem to mind. He just held his middle finger up towards the camera. Only after making sure Lily wasn't able to see it though. Richie could see him smile. Honest and warm.

Richie wriggled out of his emotional state and grabbed his laptop to get some work done. Not that he was really able to concentrate. Too much of his attention was divided towards Eddie getting butthurt over Lily's disapproval of his building skills.

Just when he finally got immersed in writing an e-mail he had been procrastinating on since days, Stanley wrote. Reminding Richie of his arrival time tomorrow, his flight number and a lot more information that was probably unimportant. Richie spent a few minutes trying to calm his friend via text before he told Bill to call him. Bill was best at everything Stanley, Richie would probably just make it worse with an ill-timed joke.

Then Beverly sent a photo of her and Ben's dinner, as well as pictures of their drive down from San Francisco. They were driving along the coast staying over in some small seaside hotel before continuing on towards LA tomorrow. The scenery was breathtaking. Richie should take the girls on a weekend trip sometime. They loved road trips.

The food was pretty to look at but nothing that could rival Eddie's pasta. At least in Richie's eyes. Eddie's pasta sauce had been heavenly. So good it reminded Richie of his visits to Italy. Maybe it had all tasted a bit too healthy but still. The girls had loved the home cooked meal. Lily had even eaten the peppers which she normally spit out in a show of disgust.

Richie spammed some more pictures of Eddie and Lily with their Lego towers into the group chat. Beverly answered with an assortment of travel selfies. They battled for a while and only stopped when Bill told them he needed to work and they were distracting him. Like a lot.

A couple of minutes later, Stan sent a picture of his dog and the chat exploded again.

"How're you holding up?"

They were sitting in the dimly lit room, the TV playing some kind of movie that neither of them was really paying attention to. Eddie looked up from his phone. His frown slowly dissipated.

"Good, good."

"For real, Eds. How is everything?"



He didn't reply right away. Instead, the frown reappeared. His face only illuminated by the blue light of the TV screen. The lines on his face seemed deeper. Richie's eyes found the knife scar on his cheek.

They made eye contact. Eddie's eyes had always been a deep pool of emotions. Easily read. Even easier to get lost in.

Eddie looked away first and Richie desperately wanted to challenge him. Make him look back at Richie. The intimacy had been almost too intense. Too much. The silence pregnant with possibilities.

How was it possible that Eddie had had a crush on him?

Had it been a joke? A fluke?

Richie still couldn't believe it.

"I'm really fine." Eddie scratched his chin, making a delicious sound. "Myra though- I don't think she's all too good. Her sister screamed at me for a solid thirty minutes while I was getting the last of my stuff. Told me it was all my fault. That I broke her. Good thing she was there though. I wouldn't have wanted to be alone with her. Myra that is."

Eddie trembled slightly. "I still can't believe it. It's over."

Richie hummed. He didn't want to joke. But he also really didn't know what to say. It was a minefield. Every possible sentence that came to his mind too intrusive, too superficial. He didn't want to deflect. He didn't want to hurt Eddie.

"Before Derry, I wasn't necessarily happy. Content maybe. If that. It was just, you know. Life. I was just living day to day. Now all my shit is stored in a unit and I'm in fucking LA meeting friends that I didn't remember for over half my life."

Eddie sighed. Looked up at the ceiling. Sighed more deeply. Richie was pretty sure he was puffing out his cheeks. Expecting eyes found Richie's. Suddenly, he felt insecure. What did Eddie want from him?

"What the hell, Trashmouth!" Eddie kicked him against the knee. "Did you fall asleep with your eyes open or some shit like that?"

Choke on your tongue?”

Richie shrugged. Made a gesture that could mean everything. Or nothing.

“I was thinking about your Mom, Edward. It was quiet intoxicating.”

Eddie gagged. Kicked Richie in the knee again. Richie caught his ankle out of reflex.

Suddenly, there was tension in the air between them. Richie’s fingers hot against the skin above Eddie’s socks. Staring at his own offending limb, Richie held his breath. He really should let go. It wasn’t happening though. He was unable to move. Frozen. His body unwilling. His face hot.

“Rich,” Eddie said. It was barely more than a whisper.

Richie took a stuttering breath. Looked up. Right into Eddie’s eyes.

“I have to apologize to Mrs. K.”

“What?”

“Every time I was with her, I was secretly thinking of you.”

Eddie blinked at him. Something exploded on the TV screen. The bright flash of light illuminating the room.

“Oh fuck you, you absolute asshole!”

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

I'm not 100% happy with this chapter. But it's NaNoWriMo and yeah... It's a whole thing.

Tell me what you think.

I personally just love Eddie cooking with Richie's kids. So wholesome!

(The last scene was slightly inspired by a Tumblr post. Credits to the creator.)

## 5. Bu-hut Strawberry

### Summary for the Chapter:

Here I go again with even more domestic fluff~ Winter where I am from is dark and cold so I needed a little comfort writing.

Welcome to the next chapter with this family! I hope you enjoy! Thanks for the wait <3 and the comments and the kudos! You're all amazing!!!

### Richie POV

Richie woke with a start, a snore stuck in his throat. He felt rested. Sleep drunk. His brain foggy, his eyes crusty. It was blessedly quiet.

The sun was up high, hinting that it was close to noon. Blue sky, only a few clouds.

Richie yawned, stretched. His back popped satisfyingly. Peace. Quiet.

He hadn't slept this well in- forever. He literally couldn't remember. College had been too many parties, too many embarrassing stories to remember. After that he'd been living day to day, comedy still barely more than a hobby. Living off of minimum wage jobs and trying not to lose himself to booze and bad company. There had been a glorious few months that he had a stable, well paying job and could finally start paying off some of his debts but that came crumbling down soon enough. He hit rock bottom with 27. Almost died a couple of times. Almost did a lot of stuff. But he had gotten through it. Soldiered on. By 30 his comedy career had started to take off and he could finally afford a decent apartment. Still shared but that was LA for you. A few years later, he suddenly had Amanda to take care of and that was that for any restful sleep. Even more so since Lily joined the family.

Normally, Lily woke him at 7 a.m. She was an early riser. Only exception was when she was sick.

Richie scrambled for his phone. 10:30 a.m. Saturday. Weekend. At least he didn't forget about school.

It was still weird. At the very least Amelia should have woken him to make breakfast. Or Lily because Amelia wouldn't give her the cereal from the top shelf.

10:30. Something was wrong.

Richie checked the bedrooms first. Both were deserted. Lily's was the usual chaos. Amelia had left the lights on. Untypical. Her laptop was opened to a word document. He switched the lights off but left the laptop as it was. Amelia would hate him to all eternity should he read something on there that he wasn't supposed to.

Closer to the stairs he could hear soft music, talking. Laughter. The distinct smell of pancakes made his mouth water. Lily screeched but in a good way.

It made him smile and feel all soft and squishy inside. Seeing his girls happy never failed to brighten his day, no matter how disastrous it had been to that point.

Lily sat on the counter, talking animatedly. She was radiant. Grinning ear to ear. Amelia was at the stove, flipping pancakes. She was swaying slightly to the music.

And then there was Eddie. Smiling and listening to Lily's babbling, while cutting up an assortment of fruits and berries that Richie didn't remember owning.

It was terrifyingly domestic. Richie felt like dramatically gripping his heart and sinking to the floor. Nobody was looking though. So instead he leaned against the wall and just watched. Enjoying the sweet ache in his chest, feeling immensely grateful.

Breakfast was delicious even though Amelia gloated about it being plant based and without sugar. Eddie said he used dates instead. Whatever that meant. Richie just nodded, which made Amelia snicker. She knew better than anyone that he was humoring them.

Lily ate too much and fell asleep on the couch two minutes after getting up to play. It made all three of them exchange smiles.

Amelia ordered Richie to do the dishes because she had helped with breakfast and therefore already completed her chores. He obliged with a bow and flourish that almost knocked a glass off of the table. It felt all too much like a dream.

After cleaning, everything got a bit hectic. He had to get both girls ready for their overnight stay at their friends' houses while Eddie took stupid photos and laughed about his "floundering about". Richie was pretty sure that it was retribution for yesterday evening.

Amelia was running around looking for her favorite hoody and Lily was cranky because Richie woke her from her nap. There were bags that needed packing, toothbrushes to be located, plushies that had to be kissed goodbye.

The doorbell rang. Richie cursed. He was currently elbow deep in the toilet bowl fishing out Lily's toothpaste that he had accidentally dropped, while his daughter was wailing and hitting his back with her favorite plushie.

He rolled his eyes, washed his hands and lifted Lily up into his hip. All in a matter of seconds.

"Shhh, bug." He rubbed her back. "It's okay. I'll buy you new toothpaste, I promise."

He bounced her slightly while walking down the stairs. Kissed her hair.

"Bu-hut strawberry!"

"Yes, strawberry."

Her little fingers dug into his back. Almost painfully so.

They finally reached the first floor and Richie couldn't believe his eyes. Eddie was standing in the open front door, talking to Amelia's friend Angel. Angel who on a good day wouldn't even look Richie in the eyes.

Amelia came clattering down the stairs behind him. She was carrying her backpack in one hand, dragging a fully packed duffle bag behind her.

At the sight of Angel giggling at one of Eddie's probably horrible jokes, Amelia stopped. She looked at Richie with wide eyes. He could only shrug, adjusting Lily on his hips.

"He doesn't seem like a threat," Richie whispered.

Right at that moment, Eddie turned around. Richie smiled innocently what made the other man squint at him.

Amelia rolled her eyes at them and pulled her friend into a bear hug. Squeezing until Angel started spluttering in protest.

"I'm so looking forward to this," she told Angel in a low, conspiratorial tone.

"Don't do anything I wouldn't do," Richie said.

"You're disgusting, I wouldn't do half the things you do!"

Richie gave her a thumbs up. "I raised you well."

She came back to Richie to give him and Lily a hug goodbye.

"I'll text you tonight when we get home, so don't worry too much!"

Richie needed both hands to hold Lily, otherwise he would have tousled her hair. "Call me if anything is wrong. You know-"

"No judgement in this house!" She nodded. "I know, I know."

"Ami, hug please!" Lily stretched her arms out and Richie let Amelia take her out of his arms.

Eddie awwed quietly. When Richie looked up, he was filming them.

Shortly thereafter, Amelia and Angel had driven off and Richie got to packing the last of Lily's things. She was blessedly busy telling Eddie

the story of how Snowy the Sloth, her favorite plushie, had once gotten lost in the neighbor's front yard. Richie had to wash it twice until the smell had become bearable.

He texted Sam's mother that Lily would need some toothpaste. A few seconds later he got a reply. It made him sigh and roll his eyes.

"Look at this." He held his phone up so Eddie could see.

Eddie frowned. "One until two lunch. Two until five Franklin Canyon - picnic. At six back at home. Dinner. Board games. Bedtime eight fifteen?" Eddie raised his eyebrows. "What is this? Your date plan? I think it's a bit presumptuous of you to expect to have your date in bed by eight fifteen."

"Yes Eddie. I usually charm my dates with board games and early bedtimes."

"Board games are great!"

Richie threw his hands up. "You're old!"

"You're older!"

"But I'm cool-old, sh-shunosaurus!" Richie glowered, hopefully getting the intended *shitface* across without words.

Lily cackled. "I want to be a Stegosaurus! They're awesome!"

Eddie kept a straight face for a few seconds before the laughter burst out of him. Richie tried - he really did. In the end he couldn't help it. He joined in, shaking his head and rubbing his eyes.

"I don't think it's that much overkill," Eddie said when they had all calmed down enough to hold a normal conversation. "Did she tell you what they'd eat? Does Lily have allergies?"

Richie should have known that Eddie would appreciate over-planning and nutritional details. Erin, Sam's mother, didn't disappoint. She sent a detailed meal plan just as Eddie finished talking.

"I can't eat fishies," Lily explained to Eddie.

"You can, you just don't like to. That's a difference." Richie gave her a gentle pat on the head. "You are slightly lactose intolerant, so we try to stay away from milk, yogurt and soft cheese."

Lily nodded. "No lacshmose! Lacshmose is bad!"

Richie knew she could say it right. Hell, the kid knew over 30 dinosaurs by heart.

"Amelia has no allergies," he said, grabbing Lily's stuff and herding them all towards the exit. "But she's vegetarian since she was nine. Vegan since last December."

Eddie just grinned at him, his eyes sparking snark.

Richie pointed at him warningly. "Open your mouth and you're sitting in the back!"

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Thank you for reading!

My life is pretty hectic rn (it's Christmas time so no surprises there) but sitting down and writing this chapter made me smile and relax a bit.

Remember to take a deep breath every now and then. You can do this!

### **Author's Note:**

Excuse my French! I'm 100% convinced Richie would let his teenaged daughter swear though.

I hope you liked this introduction to my OCs, feel free to tell me what to think. Or if you noticed any glaring grammar/spelling mistakes.

Have a great day or night! <3